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THE DIRECTOR OF CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE

WASHINGTON, D. C. 20505

80-2636

National Intelligence Officers

NFAC 7892-80
4 December 1980

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MEMORANDUM FOR: Director of Central Intelligence
Deputy Director of Central Intelligence

VIA: Deputy Director for National Foreign Assessment

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FROM:

Assistant National Intelligence Officer for Near East
and South Asia

SUBJECT: Controversy over Hostage Negotiation Proposal

1. Action Requested. None; the following is for your information.

2. Background. The minutes from your meeting with Secretary Muskie point up some very serious disconnects between State and the CIA and perhaps others as to US strategy on the hostage issue. If the main objective of the current negotiating effort is simply to buy time, then clearly our proposal is at cross purposes. Secondly, our perception of "generalized" versus "detailed" response is obviously at variance with State's. Finally, State appears to be operating on the assumption that the Iranians were serious about the final passage of the Majles statement on conditions for release, which outlines a phased release based on US performance. Our proposal, on the other hand, was formed by an implied belief that a release of all 52 hostages at one time may be possible. (I am inclined toward State's view on this; Bob Ames takes the latter position.)

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3. In my view, the strategy of buying time in the hope of the Iranians becoming more desperate is based on wishful thinking and perhaps very faulty thinking. However, if this is the course endorsed by the President, I think we should simply put our proposal on the back burner and concentrate our efforts on convincing our State colleagues of the weaknesses in this approach. Should we fail in this perhaps we could contribute some ideas on how to make the Iranians "more desperate."

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5. Finally, I think those of us at CIA working on this problem should thrash out more thoroughly our views on the prospects for a full release versus a phased one. This issue is a key aspect for any negotiating strategy and will, in any case, be a question asked of us by the new administration.

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6. As I mentioned in our last meeting, consideration of what State Department will or will not accept by way of suggestions from us should be a primary factor in our calculus. Unfortunately but understandably, State seems very defensive at this point. A "circle of wagons" mentality may have set in and I suspect the number of wagons are very few. Judging by the ideas expressed by the Secretary to you, State negotiators may not be receiving the benefit of fresh ideas or changing, and hopefully improved, interpretations of the Iranians' posture on the hostage issue. Hammering away with our ideas through the PDB may be the only productive avenue for us, if State remains unreceptive.

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